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THE FIVE STRIPES OF CHINA'S FLAG

CHARLES H. SHERRILL

THE flag of the Chinese Republic consists of five horizontal stripes, red, yellow, blue, white and black. Among the Chinese and Japanese these five hues are considered to comprise all the colors of the rainbow, for in the one which the Chinese call "ching" is included blue, green, purple, and all their shades. The so-called "five colored" porcelain of ancient China, thus interpreted, therefore, means that the artist used all his palette in its coloring. These five stripes on the Chinese flag represent its different peoples, the red one standing for those of the original eighteen provinces of China, the yellow for the Manchus, the blue (or, more properly, the "ching") for the Mongolians, the white for the Thibetans, and the black for the folk of Chinese Turkestan.

In substituting this new national emblem for the old flag of the Chinese Empire which displayed a great Dragon with hungry jaws, the Chinese Republic seems to an onlooker to have admitted that the days of the swallowing Dragon were over, and had been succeeded by a division of their land into strips, symbolizing the swallowing by five foreign Powers, England, France, Russia, Germany and Japan. The new banner reminds us that the time is past for academic discussion of the future partitioning of China—it is *already* broken up either into "spheres of influence" or else into outright partitions. If anyone questions this, will he kindly point out any considerable block of Chinese territory which has not already been seized by outsiders, or marked out as "a sphere of influence," or tabbed by some one Power with its tabu sign notifying all others to keep their hands off! Where is there a province of China without a foreign garrison, or one which she could alienate to any foreign Power without promptly eliciting a protest

from one or more of the other international bandits? The United States, alone of all the great Powers, has not taken a hand in slicing up the Chinese cake. We alone have torn no strip off the Chinese flag.

The real slicing of the cake began way back in 1842, when, after winning a comic opera war against China, England seized Hongkong (now her great naval base in the Far East), forced the opening of five Chinese ports, obtained the right to trade generally, and to establish Consulates. Right here, at the beginning, the United States Government put itself on record by officially announcing to the Chinese Government through Caleb Cushing that "we do not desire any portion of the territory of China, nor any terms or conditions whatever which shall be otherwise than just and honorable to China as well as to the United States." And to this proposition we have consistently and honestly adhered. In 1845 the British took Shanghai and also Kowloon, near Hongkong. In 1858 to 1860 Russia set the fashion for large-scale plundering by helping herself to all the land north of the Amur and east of the Ussuri rivers, a million square miles with six hundred miles of coast line. In 1885 and 1886, France, after brief and inglorious hostilities, took her great Tonkin territory in the south. These two wars were very little ones, with even less glory; the loot, however, was excellent.

In 1890, after General Graham's army had invaded and subdued Thibet, that portion of ancient China yielded herself by treaty to England's advance, which was broadened and confirmed by their trade treaty of 1893. The really exhilarating scramble for Chinese territory took place from 1895 to 1898. In the former year France, by treaties with China (and Siam in 1883) extended her former holdings by a territory half again as large as France herself, with a population of 22,000,000. She now rules a total of 80,000,000 Chinese. In that same year Japan, after a short war with China, in which her losses were negligible, demanded Formosa, the Pescadores islands and the great Liao-Tung peninsula of South Manchuria. It was just at this point that an element of humor crept into the tragedy of China's spoliation. Learning of Japan's demands, Russia, Germany and France united in a joint note to Japan declaring that it would menace international peace if Japan received her South Manchurian demands. Of course Japan had to

submit, only to see Wei-hai-wei taken by England, and a little later what she had asked in South Manchuria (and more, too!) by Russia, but, oddly enough, without injury to the same international peace concerning which the European Powers had been so solicitous.

In 1896 France and England made notable advances in the southern provinces of Yunnan and Szechuen respectively. 1897 and 1898 were banner years for European looters, for it was during the former that England got more land on the north Burma frontier, France (in March) served her "non-alienation" or "hands off" notice regarding the large island province of Hainan, while in November, thanks to the murder of two German missionaries in Shantung, Germany obtained her excuse for seizing Kiachao Bay together with much hinterland, since become famous under its province name of Shantung. Whereupon Russia, "in compensation for" what Germany had just obtained, demanded Port Arthur! That phrase "in compensation for" is really delightfully comic, if you only stop to think of it. Really, there is a great deal of innocent amusement to be derived from watching the moves in the strangulation of China, assuming, of course, that the observer be not Chinese.

February 11th, 1898, England served a "non-alienation to other Powers" notice regarding the entire valley of the Yangste Kiang river—the heart of China and commercially its most valuable section. On April 10th, 1898, (the day after Germany seized Kiachao) France claimed and took the whole Bay of Kwang-chow upon the same terms as Germany got Kiachao, and furthermore she followed England's lead by serving one of the all-too-familiar "non-alienation to other Powers" notices concerning all Chinese territory lying south of that covered by England's similar notice of February 11th blanketing the Yangste Valley, and especially protecting the provinces just north of her Tonkin. April 26th, Japan did the same regarding the province of Fukien, because, forsooth, it was that part of the mainland which fronted her island of Formosa, ninety miles away across the sea! Observe, please, that there is honor among thieves.

Next the "in compensation for" joke was sprung once more, of course with the usual success, when England, "in compensation for" Russia's "lease" (another humorous

touch) of Port Arthur insisted upon having her "lease" of Wei-hei-wai extended so as to be coterminous with that of the Russians across the way at Port Arthur. And now for the only surprise in the whole endeavor, the one and only grab that did not succeed,—Italy demanded Sanmen Bay on the Chekiang Coast, and was refused. It seems incredible that Italy should not be allowed to thrust her hand in the international grab-bag, but evidently, while five (England, France, Russia, Germany and Japan) "was company, six was a crowd", to paraphrase the old saying. In passing, it is interesting to note that all this 1898 grabbing went on while the United States was occupied with the Spanish war.

Nineteen hundred will long be remembered as the year of the Boxer outbreak in China, the march of the six allied military commands to the relief of their Legations in Peking, the three hundred million tael indemnity demanded by the allied Powers, the definite occupation of South Manchuria by the Russians, and the then meaningless punitive devastations of the German troops under definite orders from the Kaiser to recall and revive the savagery of their ancestors the Huns. Little did the world then understand the true modern meaning of the word Hun, now deeply graven on the tombstone of Germany's hopes! We Americans may properly take pride in recalling that we alone returned to China our share of the indemnity paid us (\$20,000,000).

In 1905, as a result of Japan's notable victory over Russia, she replaced that Power in South Manchuria, and subsequently in her claims over Eastern Inner Mongolia. The mills of the gods ground slowly, but thus after ten years' wait Japan had her revenge for Russia's interference in her spoils of the 1895 victory over China. During all the fifteen years following 1895 Japan, always competing with Russia, had been tightening her hold upon Korea, until at last, August 29, 1910, she cast off all diplomatic paraphrase and camouflage, deposed the Korean emperor and formally annexed his country. November 3, 1912, after Outer Mongolia had revolted from Chinese sovereignty, the revolt was formally approved by Russia (who doubtless in no wise encouraged or assisted therein!), but this document was nothing more or less than a declaration of that province passing into a Russian "sphere of influence," which China, by her

treaty with Russia of November 5, 1913, duly recognized. August 15, 1914 Japan delivered her ultimatum to Germany to surrender to her before September 15th all her Shantung holdings "with a view to the eventual restoration of the same to China." The date of that eventuality has not yet been set. January 18, 1915 Japan presented her outrageous twenty-one demands upon China, which after fruitless remonstrance, were accepted May 8th, but with formal announcement by China that it was done under duress. This unwise move of Japan's is now condemned by many intelligent Japanese.

There are other chapters in this grim despoiling of China, but the foregoing is tragedy enough for the average fair-minded onlooker. Taken altogether, it affords a strange picture of the systematic dismemberment of a great Oriental people as taught by four Christian nations of Europe, and learned by one Oriental pupil, copying its Occidental teachers before it be too late, and the white races occupy too much nearby territory, thereby endangering her seclusive safety.

The last act in the drama was the reduction of the five spoliators of China to four, by the substitution of Japan for Germany in Shantung. What will be the final outcome? Will the spoliators drop out one by one as Germany did, leaving all their spoliations to the survivors?

This breaking-up of China was materially aided by the marked differences existing between the types of Chinese inhabiting the various provinces. Then, too, the lamentable lack of roads or any other form of intercommunication except waterways facilitated piecemeal spoliation. Even close to so great a center as Canton, the only roads are footpaths running along the top of dikes separating the paddy fields. Although in some other sections rude carts are possible, the narrowness of the average road has caused large wheelbarrows (sometimes assisted by a sail) generally to supersede the cart.

Up in the north, in the loess geological formation (Province of Chihli, Shantung, Honan, Shansi and Shensi), the earth is so friable that the narrow roads are worn down further and further into the earth. In Shantung some of them are seventy feet below the surface of the ground; the effect of rain on such a road can be easily imagined—it certainly does not encourage travel even between neighbor-

ing villages. All this meant the gradual development of widely differing customs and habits, as well as contrasting philosophies and psychologies. Within the confines of greater China may be found as striking racial and thought differentiations as those marking all the European countries from the North Sea and the Baltic down to the Mediterranean. In this sense one may consider the Gulf of Chihli or the ever-shifting Hoang-ho or Yellow River as China's Baltic, and the Yangste Valley or the West River still farther south, as her Mediterranean. Even today when the different sections of China are being connected by modern improvements in communications, south Chinamen differ from the northerners as greatly as do the Latin races of south Europe from its Teutonic peoples. Even far back in history these marked divergencies existed. Five centuries before the Christian era the idealism of the great Chinese sage Laotse differed widely from the prosaic ethics later known as Confucianism, which came out of Shantung in the north. The followers of the great northerner, Confucius, learn from his writings a benevolent communism, which contrasts sharply with the individualism so highly prized in south China. In art the south shows marked differences from the north. Even as early as the third century A. D., painting flourished much more in the south than in the north, where sculpture and architecture were more highly esteemed and therefore developed. In view of these and other dissimilarities, it is remarkable that such differing peoples as the Chinese of the various provinces could so long have held together, and inertia is perhaps the best explanation therefor. Nevertheless, these differences were all the time militating against any united resistance to the gradual breaking-up which land-grabbing by foreigners was accomplishing.

Some European writers contend that the Chinese are not capable of governing themselves. Is this true? Are the Chinese themselves qualified to develop good government? What answer to this question does one get from their history or from a visit to their country? The student of Chinese self-government finds unrolled before his eyes one long monotonous scroll recording misgovernment badly administered. Dishonesty at the top and dishonesty all the way down to the smallest official, plus an amazing inefficiency. During the days of the monarchy many foreign friends of

China sighed for a republic, because the imperial officials were so notoriously inept and crooked. "Squeeze" prevailed everywhere, and an official position was valued according to the opportunity it gave for getting money "on the side." But all this unsavory state of affairs was going to be changed if and when a republic was set up. The monarchy fell, a republic was proclaimed, and the new day dawned! What has the daylight of that new day revealed?—graft everywhere, just as before,—nothing changed but the identity of the grafters. The split between the north and south of China exists and continues because of the ample opportunities it affords for graft.

The matter of soldiers' pay necessitated by the strained relations between the two sections is worth considering. There are said to be 87,000 troops quartered in Canton alone. Of course they are perfectly useless there, and a four days' observation of their appearance confirms one's conclusions in that regard, for in no other land could one see such an agglomeration of weedy old men and boys,—"all sorts and conditions of men." But they are soldiers, which means soldiers' pay, which in turn means that somebody is making a nice profit on each and every one of them, so the more employed the more profit. It's a wonder there are not more than 87,000 of them. One of their Major Generals is a comprador in a local bank, and our guide (who, when not guiding, runs a photograph shop, and is also manager of a plumbing establishment) employed his leisure hours as drill-master with the rank of Major!

At Canton one gets quite an insight into the present status of Chinese naval affairs. The West River, in its reaches above Canton, is infested with pirates, while even the boats plying downstream to Hongkong have their decks patrolled by guards carrying rifles. Any decently efficient or self-respecting naval force would promptly wipe out this mediaeval discredit to order and good government, but how do the Chinese treat the situation? Lying in the river, just off the Bund of Canton and convenient to the long rows of so-called "Flower Boats" (dives of every sort) are a number of river gunboats flying the Chinese naval flag. As a military force they deserve the name of "junk" even more than any of that craft floating by them, but even so they could stop this anachronistic river-piracy if they wished. Instead they lie comfortably anchored alongside Canton. A few miles down

the river at Whampoa (once a favorite anchorage for the famous American clipper ships) lie, and for two years have lain, three fine Chinese battle cruisers, sent down from the north to overawe this leading city of the south, the largest in population of any in China. Naval pay goes on and the boats fly the Chinese flag, so that is all that is necessary. Is it any wonder that the Japanese won their 1895 war against China with small losses?

So much for China's possibilities in the manly art of self-defense, and now what about that fundamental prerequisite for self-government—decency and honesty of the individual citizen? Some one has said that a nation gets the government it deserves, but no better. The filth of the average Chinaman is incredible. After one has walked through several of their villages, where dirty houses are thronged with ill-kept children, dirty pigs and unwashed adults, or has visited a couple of those huddled-up, never-cleansed rabbit-warrens they call cities, he sighs for the neat and tidy houses of Japan, the land where even the poor coolie has his hot bath every day. How can decency get a fair start in a Chinese village or overcrowded city? Turning to the question of individual honesty, a traveller in China hears more about thieving, and reads more about it in the papers than anywhere else in the world. One's effects must always be kept locked up, in striking contrast to Japan, where hotel rooms may be safely left unlocked without fear of loss. Even in Hongkong, admirably governed by the British as it is, shops are constantly being broken into by the Chinese, hats are snatched from passengers in jinrickshas, and counterfeit money, so common in China, is constantly passed on foreigners. I never saw any counterfeit money in Japan, but was caught twice within an hour after landing in China, and frequently thereafter. The *Hongkong Post* of December 18, 1919, summed up in a masterly editorial a general indictment against the Chinese for robbery, motor-car hold-ups, murder of gaol-keepers, etc. Villages are compactly built with no straggling houses, for fear of the numerous robbers constantly abroad in the land. Nor is thieving confined to the innumerable and omnipresent poor, for whom necessity might provide an excuse. The month before we visited Canton, the comprador of a local bank who draws a modest salary, entertained at dinner over 4,000 people! Of course he didn't steal, he only "squeezed".

This brings us to the crux of the business and political problems in China,—public opinion expects everybody in power to “squeeze,” and nobody objects to it, for each man hopes to be able later to take a hand in the game, even if he is not already engaged therein. Of course there are honest Chinamen, many of them, but public opinion countenances the “squeeze” system, and upon such a public opinion good government cannot be built. Foreign traders in Manchuria allege that this system of demanding “squeeze” by the Chinese officials is being employed by the Japanese to keep shut “the Open Door.”

Perhaps the worst curse of China is its craze for gambling. Everybody does it, and the consequence is that many who have means become beggared, and the poor stay poor. Some of that hard-working class, the chair porters of Canton and Hongkong, make as high as twenty dollars per month, which is much for such frugal-living folk, but it all goes into the gambling houses. And how is the new republic meeting this national evil that saps the nation's honesty even more than its wealth? For a while it was shut down, but about two years ago the gamblers were allowed to recommence operations, so that in cities like Canton gambling is now wide open. And who controlled the political situation in that city when so vicious a revival of gambling was permitted—some survivor of the old imperial regime? Not at all; no less a progressive reformer than Dr. Sun Yat Sen, a prominent factor in establishing the Republic. An American naval officer stationed in Chinese waters told me that early in 1917 the Chinese Admiral in Canton felt that he was not getting “his share,” and became restive, but that after Dr. Sun Yat Sen and he had had a conference on a boat upriver, half a million dollars was devoted to arsenal improvements, which cleared the political air. It would be interesting to scrutinize the details of the expenditure of that money, and check up the improvements it effected at the Arsenal.

When the Republic first came in, a determined stand was taken against the opium traffic, but laxity and worse by officials of the Republic has permitted a decided recrudescence in the trade, especially in the provinces of Shensi, Kiangsu (whose capital is Nanking) and Kwei-chow. It was not for nothing that the Chinese have long had their customs service under the financial supervision of a Brit-

isher. The fair-minded traveller, even after a short stay in the Celestial Republic, can hardly reach any other conclusion than that government of the Chinese by the Chinese will always produce the same results it has produced in the past and is today producing—inefficient government of the squeezed by the squeezers.

Lest the shortness of my stay in China made too hasty my conclusions as to Chinese character, let them be checked up against public statements by Dr. Charles K. Edmunds, for sixteen years a teacher in that country, and by Dr. George E. Vincent, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, who spent last summer travelling all over the country from Mukden to Canton and from Shanghai to Changsha on behalf of the magnificent medical benefactions which Mr. Rockefeller's millions are there bestowing. Both Dr. Edmunds and Dr. Vincent are well known leaders of scientific thought and men of unusually clear vision, and both are enthusiastic as to China's future. But what do they say of its present? In Dr. Edmunds' *33,000 Miles in China* we find an amazing series of episodes showing the knavery and especially the thievery to which the traveller is exposed in a country of pre-mediaeval civilization and lack of communications. Says Dr. Vincent in his recently published article, "Chinese Progress in Medicine, Schools and Politics":

It must be owned that there are disconcerting features in present-day Chinese life. "The Chinese lavishes so much loyalty on family, community and province that he has none left for the nation," says a clever returned student at dinner. "The country is practically sold out now; no wonder the Peking politicians are getting what they can," declares another. "Oh, we always absorb any invaders in the course of two or three centuries," is the philosophic dictum of a serene spectator of his country's danger. In a company of intelligent, foreign-trained young Chinese, some of them minor Government officials, questions about the composition of the present legislative bodies, the qualifications of the electors, the number participating in the voting and the like, elicit amused replies or merely provoke gently ironic laughter. Certain things in China may well cause apprehension: the division between North and South, which are terms of political faith rather than of geography; large armies unpaid for months, living on the countryside and terrorizing towns and cities; bandits now and then committing depredations within a few miles of centres like Peking and Canton; a government vacillating between the demands of militarists and fear of popular uprisings; revenues needed for constructive national tasks diverted to the uses of clamorous generals or dissipated in administration inefficient or worse; the development of natural resources hindered by the lack of public order and security; internal discord and weakness inviting aggression from without.

He points out that "there are nearly two hundred and fifty hospitals almost exclusively for Chinese patients, established and maintained by Protestant missionaries . . . Various Catholic orders offer hospital service, generally in the large centers." Where would hygiene in China be if these foreign-maintained institutions were suppressed and only the few Chinese-conducted ones left? The situation would be even more appalling than it is now. One of the most important temples in the largest city in China (Canton) is devoted to the God of Medicine. It is thronged by devotees who upon a small payment are allowed to draw lots and receive the prescription bearing the number they draw, and this prescription they have filled and take! In a similar temple in Shanghai they paste a prayer on that portion of a sacred image which corresponds with the ache in the suppliant's anatomy. Please notice that these practices obtain in important and improved centres of Chinese civilization and not merely in some obscure and untutored mountain village. Dr. Vincent speaks of young Chinese doctors being "trained in the United States, Europe and Japan. In the last-named country medical education of an excellent character is given in the best schools, such as that of the Imperial University of Tokio." He is quite right, and the education of every kind which China is today getting from foreigners (and without which she would receive almost none!) is everywhere in Japan provided by the Japanese themselves, and that, too, of the most modern type. I attended over half a dozen lectures at the University of Kyoto, in Political Economy, Administrative Law, advanced use of the X-Ray, etc., and was amazed at the high standard of education there displayed, and the deep interest and careful attention of the students.

But isn't there possible some middle-of-the-road plan between the discouraging inefficiency and corruption of a Chinese-run government, and foreigners tearing of her land into as many strips as her flag has stripes? The great loans (Millard says four hundred million dollars) which Japanese bankers have recently poured into China with studied carelessness as to their useful application shows that Chinese corruption must be headed off at the source of the stream. Loans to such officials should only be made under supervision of their expenditure, preferably by an international control. In this way no one country or group will be

tempted territorially to foreclose on mortgages obtained for money wasted or stolen by Chinese officials. How this can be worked out it is difficult to say, but the best plan yet advanced is the foreign loan consortium now under negotiation, which is essentially but the logical outcome of Secretary Knox's admirable suggestion for the neutralization of the Manchurian railways, which, if it served no other purpose, at least proved the non-existence of the much touted Open Door in China. International control of the Chinese customs works admirably, and there is no reason to fear that if such a system were extended, the extension would not function equally well.

The whole Chinese problem has reached such an acute stage that it seems necessary either regretfully to admit that it is too late or impractical to save their sovereignty for the Chinese, or else to show our prompt willingness to take a definite and decided stand in the matter. America must take part by contributing her share in money toward an international consortium which will so control all China's security for loans as to make impossible the control of any slice of her territorial sovereignty by an unscrupulous lender, be he an individual or a nation. Failing this willingness to "take part," America must cease her "policy of pin-pricks"—of criticizing what Japan or any other Power is doing to push its commercial or other interests in China. But whatever else we do or don't do, there is need for definite assurance by our Government of backing to such of our business men as undertake proper ventures in China. Not long ago it was the fashion to abuse fair government support of its nationals abroad—the critics called it "dollar diplomacy"—but I for one earnestly believe that the American business man deserves support from home when his American dollar is invested abroad. Once this was an academic question, but so great has grown our profit balance that now American capital must seek outlet abroad, and he who denies it proper protection is no true American. It was in just such a manly manner that the British Union Jack increased its prestige by protecting its commerce in foreign fields. Our progressive business men deserve as well of us as does the honest British trader of his own Government, and it is a safe prediction that the American is going to get it.

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